

Brigitte P. Brown, LCSW
71 Ravens Croft Rd
Vernon, CT 06066

February 17, 2022

RE: [CT State](#) Department of Education's [Budget](#)

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, State Rep Tim Ackert, State Senator Dan Champagne and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Brigitte P. Brown, and I am from Vernon. [My](#) son and daughter attend [the](#) Greater Hartford of Academy of Arts Middle School in Bloomfield, which is a CREC Magnet School. I am asking you to please support an increase in the RESC state magnet grant.

My children benefit greatly through the extraordinary opportunities that they both experience every day at [CREC's](#) Arts Middle School. This diverse and engaging learning environment with music and [arts](#) programing, benefits both my son and daughter. My son, Shemu'el, is an 8th grader and my daughter, Mia-Amor, is a 7th grader.

For my son especially, this experience has been very important to him since he has an intellectual disability, and has been supported by his Individualized Education Plan in this school. I understand that this legal document has to be upheld in any educational setting, including my home district in Vernon. But this school offers the hands-on approach, and community that best supports my children's education. My son has come such a long way with the school staff support, and curriculum at this school. He has been accepted into the school environment, just as he is, and the staff have created a community of support around him between staff and peers. My son is a natural born drummer, and the music program has kept him focused and engaged in his learning. Not to mention, we have the best principal ever! Mr. Ryan has kept me involved and engaged in my son and daughter's education and he makes school fun. The communication is ongoing and is a two way street. They have been so supportive of his special needs, and I value all that they do.

Additionally, I know that my children learn better and are more prepared for the real world as a result of working alongside other students from different backgrounds. We definitely wanted to put our children in a more diverse environment with other kids that reflect and look like them, too. We are Afro-Latinos and that was extremely important to both me and my husband.

Our magnet schools are at risk. Without sustainable funding, CREC, which operates 18 innovative schools, will be forced to either cut programming or to increase the tuition costs they charge to local school districts. I am asking the legislature to follow through on its promise to invest in the future of all students. Magnet schools have a successful track record of providing

their students a chance to thrive. Currently the Sheff Stipulated Agreement requires the expansion of schools and program, before you add any more schools, please adequately fund those that you have established and that are thriving. I urge you to continue funding the schools that are already operating and available and have demonstrated success before you consider funding new school choice options.

Thank you so much for your time and opportunity to testify and provide my testimony to you all. I know that you will make the right decision to continue to put our children first on your decision and you will continue to provide quality education and programming to our CREC students.

Sincerely,

Brigitte P. Brown, LCSW
A very committed CREC Parent
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